

CORK SCHOOL OF ART.

ANNUAL DISTRIBUTION OF PRIZES.

THE annual distribution of prizes to the successful pupils of the School of Art took place in the Theatre of Cork Institution on Tuesday evening.

The MAYOR presided.

Mr. Brennan, Master of the School, read the report as follows :—

Mr. Mayor, Ladies, and Gentlemen,—I have the honour to submit the report of the working of the Cork School of Art for the past twelve months. The attendance at the school (which this time twelvemonth showed a slight decrease as compared with the corresponding period of the preceding year) has, I am happy to say increased considerably, particularly in the evening class. The total number of students who passed through the school last year was 188. This does not include an average attendance of 23 boys from National Schools, who attend the evening classes, receiving their instruction, and having drawing materials provided gratis for themselves, the National Board paying a small amount yearly for the instruction, &c., of each student. In addition to this, instruction in drawing has been given to the Blue Coat School and various National Schools, by means of the pupil teachers of the School of Art, and it is also a gratifying feature that some teachers of the National and Model Schools avail themselves of the instruction afforded by the School of Art, and that in each year since 1868, one or more have succeeded in passing all the subjects of the second grade certificate, thus qualifying themselves to earn payments on the teaching of drawing in the different schools to which they may be appointed. Amongst the successes of the pupils of the School of Art I may mention that last year the Coach makers' Guild of the City of London offered the silver medal of the Company to the student who, being engaged in some branch of their handicraft, should be considered by the Science and Art Department to have submitted the best works during the year. The medal was awarded to Mr. Jeremiah Mullins, of Maylor-street, a most painstaking and industrious student. This competition was open to all the schools in the Kingdom. In the spring of this year Mr. William Barton (manufacturer), Boston, Lincolnshire, offered two prizes of £5 and £3 for the best designs for encaustic tiles for decorating the sides of firestoves. The competition was open to 36 Schools of Art. The first prize was awarded to Miss Anne Baker, a student of the school; and although the second prize was awarded to the student of another school by the examiners, Mr. Barton wrote to say that in his opinion both prizes should have gone to the Cork school—and signified his approval of the designs by purchasing those sent by M rs. Henry Hill. These designs have been manufactured for him by Messrs Minton and Co., and he has recently written to me saying they will well repay the cost and trouble. The science classes in plane and solid geometry have not, until this winter, been availed of and in my opinion they ought, and yet those who attended have been most successful. Three students obtained classes in 1870 and one in 1871, and when we take into account that the number attending the class did not exceed three, these figures represent a fair percentage. At present there are fourteen students in the class. A knowledge of this subject is invaluable to the carpenter, engineer, &c., who wishes to understand the principles that govern the construction of the drawing from which be works, and not trust to mere rule of thumb as is too often the case. Thanks to the liberality of your Worship, the committee have been enabled to offer prizes in various stages of drawing to the students attending the evening class, and through the kindness of a late member of the committee prizes were also offered to students of the day classes. The competition in some of the stages has been very keen, and the result is that a large number of well-executed drawings have been produced, and will, I am sure, bring further credit to the students at the examination in South Kensington next May. In conclusion, I can safely say that the School of Art, labouring, as it does under the disadvantage of being carried on in rooms almost totally unfitted for their purpose, does its work fairly and well. We do not profess to make a Hogan or a Maclise to order—such men cannot be manufactured; but we do profess to give sound practical instruction in the various branches of drawing, whether freehand or geometrical.

To the student who desires the knowledge merely as an accomplishment, the school affords an opportunity of gratifying the taste; while to aid the artizan, the more severely practical studies of mechanical and geometrical drawing are not lost sight of. It gives an opportunity to all of showing what latent talent may in them be lying undreamt of—in one word, we believe all may be improved by their knowledge of an art that is each day being acknowledged to be of growing importance; and we trust the time will come when the power of description by means of the pencil will be as familiar to us all as by the means of the pen it is at present.

Mr. Scott, in moving the adoption of the report, said he had experience of the School of Design for many years, and he fully recognised the great and numerous advantages it conferred on the citizens of Cork. He regretted that the subscriptions were not commensurate with the worth of the institution, and he thought some steps ought to be taken to endeavour to increase them. They could not but observe that the building in which the school was held was not at present a suitable one, and he thought the Corporation could very well take the matter in hands, and erect a fine establishment which would answer the purposes of a town hall, and at the same time afford those advantages that should necessarily accrue to the youth of the city from having a School of Design united with it.

Mr. Beale seconded the adoption of the report, and remarked that he had long experienced the progress of the fine arts in the city. The first school of art established in Cork was in 1815, but in 1834 it had made such little progress that the annual subscriptions were at the time only £133. That should not have been the case; and to-day the subscriptions for the encouragement of art in the city that had sent out so many famous artists should be even larger than they were.

The Mayor, in putting the proposition, said that no duty that devolved on him was more pleasing than to preside that evening. He believed there was nothing more important in a large city than that its young men should get an opportunity of studying the beautiful in art; and he considered it the duty of Government to afford the means of technical education to aspiring and industrious youths. He believed it would be a very good policy for those who legislated for them to afford them in that city some of the means of advancement and culture which were given to large cities like London, Dublin and Glasgow. The artisan who endeavoured to get knowledge of arts in a small city like Cork was at a great disadvantage as compared with his brother artisan in London. There the artisan could at any moment, when his time permitted, turn into a place where he could study the great works of art, but such opportunities were very few in Cork, and he thought the Government should afford large opportunities of enabling the working classes to procure technical education. As the world advanced labour advanced. A man might be a good worker with his hands but he should be gifted with a power of design to aid his hands. The working classes of the United Kingdom were at a great disadvantage as compared with their fellow workmen on the Continent. That fact was attracting the attention of those who legislated for them. The disadvantages in a provincial city like Cork were still greater. They had not those benevolent individuals amongst them who would give large grants for those schools they had no mechanic's institutes—and they were denied even the liberality of private individuals. These were great disadvantages, along with the fact that the Government did not provide them with a proper place to encourage the taste of artisans. The study of art was always beneficial to those who prosecuted it, and he thought that industrious young lads like one to whom he had the pleasure of giving two prizes that evening should get an opportunity of developing their tastes. Cork had been especially fortunate in the position it occupied in the artistic world—he doubted if there was another city of its size that could claim such

celebrity. It produced such men as Hogan, Maclise, Barry, and Fisher, and these were sprung from, if not from the lower classes, at all events from the middle classes of the community. While they laboured under such disadvantages the world might never know what gems still lay undiscovered. The tendency of modern manufacture was imitation and to produce that which would please the eye. They should therefore educate their workmen and give them ideas of beauty, and they should frame their minds from boyhood to form opinions of the beautiful. As far as regarded that school, he was surprised to hear it existed since the year 1815, and he was still more astonished that it did not receive larger support. That might arise from a variety of causes—it might be that some were not aware of its existence. He thought that if they held annual exhibitions of the works it would bring the society prominently before the public, and would give rise to a spirit of emulation amongst the pupils. He could not conclude without testifying as to the thanks that were due by the City of Cork and the students of the school to their indefatigable and talented master, Mr. Brennan. It was most important that the native talent of the industrious classes should be properly developed, and that could only be ensured by their having a good master over them. They were most fortunate in possessing such an advantage in the person of Mr. Brennan, and he was only expressing the feelings of the pupils when he thanked that gentleman for the care, attention, and ability he had brought to bear in promoting, as far as in him lay, the interests of the institution.

Mr. Brennan returned thanks for the compliment paid to him. He said they had reason to be proud of the ability displayed by the students, and he hoped they would go on year after year reaping still larger harvests of success. A gentleman interested in the school announced his intention to him of giving £5 for prizes for the coming year if another gentleman contributed a like sum.

The report was adopted.

Mr. Brennan then read the prize list, and the proceedings terminated.

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